

FULL BRAIN, EMPTY POCKET: IRONY AND DISILLUSIONMENT IN ADAOBI TRICIA NWAUBANI'S *I DO NOT COME TO YOU BY CHANCE* (2009)

SIMALOY WANJIRU WAINAINA

Department of Languages, Literature and Communication, The Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Nairobi, Kenya

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the ways in which the irony employed by Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani in her text, I Do Not Come to You by Chance (2009), revealed the central message of disillusionment within the text. The study applied a qualitative research design, using research methods such as close textual reading and content analysis, and was guided by Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences. The research found that the situational irony used in the text was highly successful in communicating the idea of disillusionment arising from the inability of academic prowess and/or a university degree to offer economic success in life, and urges readers to think about alternative definitions of intelligence, as well as the varied means to success they present. It further recommends that stakeholders in education including governments and schools, among others, work on ways to ensure that individuals' intelligences are not only honed but that, additionally, outlets (including jobs) are created for them to employ their skills. The study finally exhorts Literary researchers to engage in further study of texts that reveal (economic) disillusionment as a means to raise more awareness on the matter and compel relevant stakeholders into speedy rectification of the same.

KEYWORDS: Irony, Disillusionment, University Degrees, Joblessness & Multiple Intelligences

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani was born in Enugu, Nigeria, and is a journalist, novelist, essayist and humorist. She earned her first income at the age of thirteen after winning a writing competition (Adaobi Tricia, 2021). Her published books include *I Do Not Come to You by Chance* (2009), which won the 2010 Commonwealth Writers Prize for Best First Book - Africa and the 2010 Betty Trask First Book Award; and *Buried Beneath the Baobab Tree* (2018), which won the Raven Award for Excellence in Arts and Entertainment (Pulitzer Center, 2021). This article examines the former text.

I Do Not Come to You by Chance (2009) tells the story of Kingsley Ibe, a young man who exerts himself in school and dedicates himself to his academics until he graduates with a degree in Chemical Engineering. Unfortunately, he is thereafter unable to find employment as a Chemical Engineer. Kingsley's parents, Paulinus and Augustina, have ingrained in him since his youth that working hard in school and obtaining a university degree is the path to a good, prestigious job, and financial security. While Kingsley has followed, to the letter, his parents' advice and attained the heights of educational success, a job and financial security nevertheless elude him. When his father passes away due to an illness that has drained the family's resources, Kingsley joins his uncle, Uncle Boniface a.k.a. Cash Daddy, in the flourishing - though unscrupulous - 419 business of financial scamming of individuals through emails and faxes. His position as *opara* - the first born son of the family - dictates that in the absence of his father, he take up the responsibility of taking care of his mother and siblings. A job in Chemical Engineering elusive and financial needs still present, Kingsley takes his uncle's offer to join 419, prospers in it,

educates his siblings and takes care of his family. After Cash Daddy decides to get into the world of politics and is killed while pursuing his political ambitions, Kingsley chooses not to take over the former's business, but rather continues scamming on his own, opening an Internet Cafe business that acts as a cover and a guise for his 419 work.

Kingsley's academic success throughout his schooling life and his eventual graduation with a degree gives him a full brain: his brain is full of information, skill and know-how. According to his parents, this is supposed to yield wealth and financial success. Unfortunately, Kingsley does not have a job, and is broke: his pocket is empty. This is an ironic turn of events: a full brain should result in a full pocket. In Kingsley's life, however, a full brain is accompanied by an empty pocket. This ironic turn of events in Kingsley's life leads to much disillusionment not only to him, but to his family and friends as well.

Irony is "a contrast between what is expected and what actually happens" (Moore Schools, 2019). There are three major types of irony namely situational irony, dramatic irony and verbal irony. Situational irony is seen when paradoxical events occur (LitCharts, 2019). An English teacher who misspells words when writing them on the blackboard for her students to copy is an example of situational irony. It is paradoxical and unexpected that a teacher teaching others the machinations of language would misspell words. Dramatic irony occurs when one knows information that the characters in a text (or play, movie, or other production) do not (Moore Schools, 2019). If movie-goers know that someone is following the main character in the movie in order to rob him but the character himself does not know this, this is a case of dramatic irony: the audience knows something that the character does not. Verbal irony occurs when one says the opposite of what is meant (Ibid.). To say that the weather is perfect for a picnic when it is actually raining cats and dogs is to engage in verbal irony. This article explores the irony of Kingsley's full brain and empty pocket, as well as related situational ironies in Nwaubani's text.

Authors employ irony in their texts for various reasons: irony moves the plot forward and reveals character personalities (Thompson, 2021); it provides character arcs that mirror human existence (Smith, 2019); it brings about humor (Owen, 2019) and emphasizes central ideas (Author's Craft, 2022). This article argues that the situational irony in Nwaubani's text emphasizes the central idea of disillusionment.

The Collins Dictionary defines disillusionment as, "the disappointment that you feel when you discover that something is not as good as you had expected or thought" (2022). The Cambridge Dictionary adds that disillusionment is "a feeling of being disappointed and unhappy because of discovering the truth about something or someone that you liked or respected" (2022). Kingsley was raised to believe that education - specifically the attainment of a degree - was a good thing because it would open the doors to wealth and economic prosperity. While he excelled in school and got a coveted degree, the promise of prosperity remained unfulfilled. Education - the attainment of a degree - was not as good or as advantageous as it had been made out to be; it did not live up to all it was promoted to be because it did not open the doors of economic prosperity to him. He was, therefore, disillusioned, as were his family and friends around him.

This study investigates the irony that an educated mind - a full brain - can have a broke and empty pocket, and the disillusionment - as well as the resultant outcomes - thereby caused.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Irony is a stylistic device that authors use to, among other things, emphasize central ideas in their texts. This article argues that the situational irony that Nwaubani uses in her text, *I Do Not Come to You by Chance* (2009), is very effective in

revealing the central idea of disillusionment in the text.

1.2 Justification of the Study

This study reveals the power of irony in passing across the idea of disillusionment arising from the inability of academic prowess and/or a university degree to offer economic success in life, and prompts readers to think about alternative definitions of intelligence, as well as the varied means to success they present.

1.3 Theoretical Framework

The current research is guided by the Theory of Multiple Intelligences as put forth by Harvard Psychologist Howard Gardner in his book *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* (1983) and as elucidated by Cherry (2021). Gardner suggested that traditional understandings of intelligence were too limited, and that it was important and necessary to understand and outline the different abilities and strengths different individuals possess. He abandoned the conventional views of intelligence that limited intelligence only to cognitive capacities and reasoning abilities, saying that they were too narrow, and instead advised that multiple intelligences be embraced, as they better reflected the strengths and abilities of different individuals. Outlining Gardner's proposals, Cherry indicates that there are broadly eight types of intelligences that individuals possess, namely Visual-Spatial; Linguistic-Verbal; Logical-Mathematical; Bodily-Kinesthetic; Musical; Interpersonal; Intrapersonal and Naturalistic intelligences. Human beings possess all the intelligences, though some are expressed more strongly than others in each individual, so that every person has a unique profile of intelligence expression.

Individuals who are strong in Visual-Spatial intelligence have superior visual and spatial judgment and do well in careers such as Architecture, for example. Those who are strong in Linguistic-Verbal intelligence are adept at using words in both written and spoken form, and flourish in careers like Journalism and Law. People who are strong in Logical-Mathematical intelligence readily recognize patterns and analyze problems; they perform well as Mathematicians and Scientists, while those who are strong in Bodily-Kinesthetic intelligence are good at bodily movement and control and thrive in careers such as Sculpting and Sports. Individuals who possess strong Musical intelligence are skilled at musical composition and performance, and make good Music Teachers and Composers, while those who possess strong Interpersonal intelligence are able to relate and interact effectively with others. The latter succeed in such careers as Psychology. Individuals who are strong in Intrapersonal intelligence are self-aware and understand their motivations, and make good Philosophers, whereas those who are strong in Naturalistic intelligence are interested in nature and the environment, and would fit well in careers such as Farming. A person may be strong in several intelligences depending on what they choose to strengthen and nurture, or ignore and weaken, "though some people will improve more readily in one intelligence area than in others" (Educational Broadcasting Corporation, 2004). Thus one, for example, may be strong in, say, Naturalistic and Interpersonal intelligences, and weaker in others.

The Theory of Multiple Intelligences guided this study as it helped explain why individuals in Nwaubani's text who did not perform well academically and had no university degrees (and were thought to be 'empty-brained'), nevertheless succeeded in life and prospered financially. However, those who were highly educated (the 'full-brained') were not as prosperous in life as had been expected and remained empty-pocketed. The Theory of Multiple Intelligences helps to illuminate that those that were not academically inclined and did not possess strong Linguistic-Verbal intelligence, for example, nevertheless possessed strong Intrapersonal and Interpersonal intelligences that helped them succeed and prosper in life.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Several researchers have engaged in study to show how writers' use of irony in their texts can work to pass across main ideas in their texts as exemplified below:

Singh (2012) posits that "most works of fiction that employ irony tend to deal with serious issues, such as the hypocrisy in religion, society, or government ... Irony ... can be an effective way to not only approach such topics but do so in [a] way that is humorous or entertaining". This study concurs with Singh's study, as it acknowledges the effectiveness of irony in passing across an author's central topics and messages. The present study, however, departs from the use of irony in highlighting hypocrisy, and instead focuses on how irony can be used to advance disillusionment.

Keller (2022) opines that a writer can use irony to make a point, as does Jonathan Swift, in his *A Modest Proposal* (1729). Keller argues that Swift frames his text as an (ironic) moralistic satire, to decry the tyranny and abuse the English meted upon the Irish at the time of the writing of the text. The Irish were subject to the wealthy English, and the former languished in poverty and hunger. Swift's text 'modestly proposed' that to curb the dire situation of the Irish, the Irish were best placed to consider fattening their one year old children, selling them to wealthy Englishmen at a large profit, and thereby escaping poverty. The English would delight in a new menu of Irish children, who could be cooked using a variety of methods. Keller puts forth that Swift employs irony in his text to satirize the Irish and English communities/administrations of the time, calling attention to the morally flawed political and socioeconomic situations of the said time. This study deviates from the use of irony to satirize administrative failures, and focuses on the use of irony to show disillusionment.

Oktarini (2020) puts forth that Kurt Vonnegut's Dystopian Science-fiction short story *Harrison Bergeron* (1961) employs irony to emphasize the notion that governments that adhere to egalitarian systems are oppressive to their citizens. He further shows that Vonnegut's use of irony is effective in revealing that governments that try to force equality upon their citizens engage in acts that are "ridiculous and impossible to do" (54). These sentiments are shared by other scholars such as Machan (2001) who argues that governments that insist on the equality of their citizens and "attempt to ram everyone into the same procrustean bed would not only be destructive of the general welfare but also cripple the ability to choose morally" (xxiv). This study acknowledges the fact that, as posited by Oktarini and Machan, governments can indeed contribute to the oppression of their citizens. However, while Oktarini's study on irony dwells on how governmental egalitarianism causes oppression, the present study, among other things, shows that governments that fail to address the economic needs of their citizens can cause the disillusionment of its citizens, leading them to engage in crime.

Nithiyaa and Kanchana (2018) argue that the title of Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979) is ironic considering the content of the text. They argue that this irony is vital as it serves to stress and drive home Emecheta's main message that motherhood can, in fact, be a largely painful experience rather than a joyful one. The text follows the protagonist Nnu Ego, who, from the attainment of motherhood till death, lives a joyless existence and experiences much heartache as a result of bearing children. Nnu Ego's journey into motherhood begins with the struggle to conceive and get children. When she does eventually get children, she suffers the pain of losing a child thereby becoming suicidal; doing odd jobs to eke a living to single-handedly and sacrificially raise the multiple children that lived; abandonment from the very children she struggled to raise; emotional trauma following the aforementioned abandonment, and eventually a lonely death. In her death, she never answers the prayers of women who pray to her to ask for children. Nithiyaa and Kanchana vividly show how an author can use irony in a title to pass across the stark and sobering message that motherhood can be a

misery-ridden experience. This study, on the other hand, seeks to show that irony when used within a text can be used to reveal societal disillusionment.

Kamau (2022) argues that in his play *Betrayal in the City* (1976), Francis Imbuga uses irony to effectively stress the notion of betrayal. Kamau reveals several situational ironies, such as the fact that the soldiers in the play, men such as Mulili, are supposed to be the ones to protect the citizens of a country, and yet it is they who take advantage of their positions and harm innocent citizens. Mulili mocks Nina and Doga following the death of their son, and forbids them from carrying out the shaving ceremony at his graveside. He later has them killed. It is ironic that security forces who are supposed to protect the citizens of a country are the ones harming them instead. Kamau argues that this irony is vital in passing across the main message of betrayal in Imbuga's text. The present study deviates from the use of irony in drama to show betrayal, and instead focuses on how irony has been used in Nwaubani's novel to pass across the main message of disillusionment.

The literature review above shows that irony is effective in passing across central messages in Literature. However, it leaves a knowledge gap on how irony in Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani's *I Do Not Come to You by Chance* (2009) passes across the message of disillusionment, a task that this research undertakes.

3.0 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a qualitative research approach. The data collected was non-numerical, hence a qualitative approach was appropriate. Primary data was collected from Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani's *I Do Not Come to You by Chance* (2009), and secondary data was collected from scholarly journals, theses, dissertations and the Internet. Data was collected by close textual reading and analyzed through content analysis, which is "a systematic research method for analyzing and making inferences from text and other forms of qualitative information [and where] key trends and themes are identified [through] systematic coding of the data" (United States Government Accountability Office, 2013). The processed data was then presented through a logical sequence of discussions. All sources used in this research were acknowledged to avoid plagiarism.

4.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Full Brain, Empty Pocket

The section of the title of this study that reads 'full brain, empty pocket' is taken from page 43 of Nwaubani's *I Do Not Come to You by Chance* (2009). It is contemplated upon by the protagonist, Kingsley, when he thinks about his father's academic brilliance (full brain) juxtaposed against his extreme poverty (empty pocket). The statement, brief as it may be, altogether summarizes the predominant situational irony of the text, as well as the dire disillusionment carried within it.

From very early in the text (the Prologue, in fact), Nwaubani shows the ways in which education is valued and aggrandized by various members of Kingsley's family. Kingsley's maternal grandfather sends Kingsley's mother, Augustina, to primary and secondary schools. Thereafter, while living with her aunt, she meets the love of her life, United Kingdom-trained Engineer Paulinus. She is smitten by his intelligence, by the way he seems to know so much about so many things, and falls in love with his brain (p. 9). Paulinus greatly values education and tells Augustina that if she goes to university, he will pay her school fees and then marry her: she agrees to this offer.

Paulinus is not only elated when Augustina gets admission into university to study Clothing and Textile, but he also immediately begins to think ahead about the education of his future children. He tells Augustina, "... our children are

going to be great. They're going to have the best education. They're going to be engineers and doctors and lawyers and scientists'" (p. 10). To Paulinus, education is the goddess that opens the doors to greatness and economic bliss. Paulinus later travels to the United Kingdom with Augustina, where they both attain their Masters degrees. When Paulinus and Augustina do eventually get children, they send them to school. This study focuses largely on the educational/life journey of Paulinus' and Augustina's first born son, the *opara* of the family, Kingsley.

Kingsley's parents teach him from very early that "... education [is] everything. She [is] the recipe for wealth, the pass to respectability, the ticket to eternal life" (p. 16). According to Paulinus, education allows one to be useful in the world, makes one known and respected wherever he goes, and keeps one from ending up with 'meager' jobs such as selling vegetables in the market. Education helps one make good decisions and opens up thousands of opportunities for him. It allows him to live up to his fullest potential (pp. 16-17).

One day when Kingsley is still a child and in primary school, at break time, he decides to engage in a game of a sport in which he is talented - football - and returns home with his school shirt ripped and stained. His mother gives him a thorough whipping, and his father gives him a serious talk, in which he vilifies sports, calling them 'silly things' (p. 16). He tells Kingsley, "...you must stop wasting your time on silly things. You must read your books ... focus on your studies and on the future you have ahead of you. A good education is what you need to survive in this world. Do you hear me?" (p. 16). Kingsley heard his father, completely believed him, and transformed his ways so that he no longer wasted his time on 'silly things'. When he saw his friends playing, he felt that they were "squandering their time and energy" (p. 17), pitied them, felt superior to them and kept away from them. He beat and outdistanced them academically. Years later he graduated from university as the top-performing student in his class, with a degree in Chemical Engineering.

Because Kingsley performed so well in school over so many years and graduated as the top-performing student in his class, he looked forward to getting a job working in a prestigious oil company such as Shell. Since he had graduated from university, he had sat many interviews, passed administered tests, and then, at the last minute, been informed that he had not succeeded in meeting the companies' requirements. When he fails a fourth interview at his latest job-seeking attempt, he is broken, dismayed and shocked that after attending three interviews and then going for a fourth, he is still unsuccessful. He reveals:

[I was] Perplexed and stupefied and woebegone. As if I was stuck in a maze and each time I found an exit, lightning would strike right across my path. This particular rejection letter was exceedingly painful because I had defied all the odds by getting as far as the last interview ... Still, as I progressed from one stage of the interview to the other, we had all assumed that this time would be different. Someone had identified that I had graduated as best student in my Chemical Engineering class. Surely, they could see that I was an outstanding brain (p. 28).

Kingsley's mother has comforted him time and time again after his failed job-seeking attempts, but after hearing her encouraging words so many times, with no accompanying positive outcome, he no longer has hope. He is devastated: he wanted to get a job so that he could fulfil his responsibility as first-born son of taking care of the family, and also so he could be able to raise funds to marry the girl he loved, Ola. A wedding was an expensive affair (p. 26).

Having waited for so long for Kingsley to get a job, Ola and her mother, Mama, have grown impatient. They have become cold and distant towards him, because his lack of a job has kept Ola waiting to get married. Mama tells Kingsley:

So how long exactly are we supposed to wait for you to settle down? ... Other men are finding their way ... Other

men know what and what to do to move ahead. Your own is just different. Is it certificate that we shall eat? If I say that you're useless, it'll be as if I'm insulting you. But since you people met, I can't see anything at all - not one single thing - that Ola has benefited from you. As far as I'm concerned, you're a complete disappointment (p. 42).

Kingsley is torn by Mama's assertion. He immediately begins to wonder if his family feels the same way - that he is a disappointment - and considers:

Maybe I had not been as smart as other young men who were 'finding their way'. Maybe I had been too carried away by my academic achievements. After all, my father, with all his brilliance, was wallowing in poverty. I shuddered at the thought of ending up like him - full brain, empty pocket (p. 43).

Kingsley realizes that with all his academic achievements, he is nevertheless a disappointment to his intended mother-in-law, as he is still jobless. And he acknowledges, too, that his father, despite his 'foreign' degrees, is living in poverty, as is his mother. Kingsley's parents cannot afford to buy decent, nutritious food for the family, and their meals taste like sawdust (p. 19). His siblings are skinny and his mother (much as she's a tailor/fashion designer) wears old, unattractive clothes (p. 127). Paulinus can barely afford to pay for the medication for his diabetes (p. 14), and when he has to be admitted at the hospital, his family must borrow money from others to pay for his upkeep (p. 85). They have no money, and they only have crumbs left in the bank (p. 85). "Life was hard. Times were bad," Kingsley admits (p. 13).

It is beginning to dawn on Kingsley that this education, particularly a university degree, that was so praised, so extolled and glorified, is not living up to all it was paraded to be. It was supposed to be "... everything ... the recipe for wealth, the pass to respectability, the ticket to eternal life" (p. 16). And yet, those who had it were anything but wealthy and respectable. The people he knew to be educated - well educated, at that - like his parents and others, were wallowing in poverty and lack. He confesses of those he knew to be educated:

My father was a walking encyclopedia, and he flipped his pages with the zeal and precision of a magician. He knew every theory of science and every city in the atlas; he knew every word in the dictionary and every scripture in the Holy Bible. It was such a pity that all the things he knew were not able to put money in his pocket (p. 19).

My father was learned and honest. Yet he could neither feed his family nor clothe his children. My mother was also learned, and her life had not been particularly improved by much education. I thought of my father's pals, most of whom were riding rickety cars ... about most of my university lecturers with their boogie-woogie clothes and desperate attempts to fight off hunger by selling overpriced handouts to students (pp. 127-128).

When Kingsley one day runs into a former classmate, Andrew, who is now based in America, Andrew is perplexed and tickled that Kingsley studied engineering and then got into the 'import and export business' (p. 244). Kingsley says of him, "... he could afford to open his mouth and make all sorts of stupid comments. He was so busy munching frankfurters in America, he had probably not yet seen any of the engineers and lawyers and medical doctors who were wearing hunger from head to sole" (p. 245).

Thus, characters in the text possessing education, particularly the tertiary kind, full-brained as they are, including doctors, lawyers, engineers and lecturers among others, are wallowing in poverty, empty-pocketed. This is a highly (situationally) ironic turn of events: the full-brained were supposed to be the full-pocketed. This realization leaves Kingsley, some members of his family as well as friends like Ola and her mother, extremely disappointed and highly

disillusioned.

4.2 Empty Brain, Full Pocket

Contrasted against the lives of the highly educated is that of Kingsley's uncle, Boniface, who is anything but educated. Boniface failed his way through school. While in primary school, he repeated several classes several times, and left secondary school without a certificate. And yet, as 'uneducated' as he was, he was nevertheless the wealthy one in the family. Kingsley testifies of Uncle Boniface, "Despite his poor academic record, Uncle Boniface was extremely wealthy. Rumours abounded of his innumerable cars and real estate and frequent trips abroad" (p. 43).

In fact, Uncle Boniface had a lot of worldly possessions. For all his 'empty' brain, he sure had deep and full pockets that afforded him such things as: celebrity status in the part of the country where he lived (p. 88); multiple high end cars that each had a driver and personalized number plates (pp. 90, 91); bodyguards (p. 91); respect, recognition and awards from various organizations to which he had made financial contributions (p. 94); exquisite furniture (pp. 94, 110, 112); CCTV cameras monitoring his property and wealth (p. 112); homes and mammoth mansions in Nigeria and other parts of the world like Europe (pp. 98, 122); influence over the police and airport immigration officials (pp. 111, 243); medical check-ups in places like America (p. 98); a variety of foods and assorted meats to eat (p.113); racks and rooms full of leather shoes, none costing less than a thousand dollars (p. 114); wristwatches and designer clothing (p. 115); a woman that popped the pimples on his face using her fingers (p. 122); assistants that performed major and minor tasks in his homes and offices (p. 124); exquisite memberships to golf clubs (p. 183); power generators that lit his home when there was no electricity (p. 187); commercial apartments for his wife and one of his girlfriends in London (p. 223); sexual favors from women (p. 229), and car showrooms, filling stations, hotels and rented properties (p. 316). Like Kingsley, his parents and others who were university-educated and yet had empty pockets, it is ironic that Uncle Boniface, despite having an 'empty' brain, nevertheless had full pockets that afforded him much. He was so wealthy that people called him 'Cash Daddy'.

Besides owning much, however, Cash Daddy also used his vast wealth to help others. In fact, when Kingsley's father, Paulinus, was unwell and needed to be admitted in hospital for an extended period, it was Cash Daddy who met these medical expenses until Paulinus was able to improve, get out of his coma (p. 115), and return home to his family. Paulinus and Augustina were not able to pay off the bills, and had borrowed from everyone they knew. When Paulinus later fell in the bathroom and died, it was Cash Daddy who met his funeral expenses: he paid for obituary announcements in the newspapers, television and radio; transport to ferry mourners; food and drinks to feed the mourners; a brand new Italian suit for Paulinus' corpse, and even completed the village home that Paulinus was unable to (pp. 144-145). The funeral was pompous and a great success, thanks to Cash Daddy. Additionally, when Cash Daddy saw how economically strained Kingsley and his family members were, particularly in the absence of their father, he invited Kingsley into the trade that had garnered him his wealth: he was not afraid to share (p. 126). And indeed, Kingsley was able to soar in that trade and amass his own wealth: he was able to purchase his own four-bedroom duplex (p. 166); buy cars such as a brand new Lexus, Grand Cherokee Jeep and BMW 5 Series for himself (pp. 166, 183, 249) and a Mercedes Benz for his mother (p. 168); pay for expensive satellite television (p. 169); purchase furniture imported from Italy (p. 169); acquire brand name, real feather-filled bed pillows (p. 183); take trips abroad to places like London (p. 192) and stay in five-star hotel rooms (p. 197); purchase designer clothes for himself and his siblings (pp. 197, 251); acquire electrical appliances for his relatives such as fridges (p. 243); purchase an eight-bedroom house (p. 263) as well as afford the services of servants such

as a driver, gardener and cook (p. 263). He felt like a real *opara* when he was able to meet not just his mother's and siblings' basic needs, but also their wants.

Cash Daddy's trade was '419'. He had earned his fortune through engaging in the said business, one that entailed swindling off millions of dollars from unsuspecting individuals (called mugus) through scam email and fax messages (p. 51). His business was thriving. His unschooled colleagues, too, were flourishing. Cash Daddy's janitor, for example, a novice in the 419 business, had managed to buy a Mercedes Benz (p. 204). Besides Uncle Boniface and his colleagues in 419, others who had succeeded economically without tertiary education included Ola's new beau, a man who had made a fortune out of the transport business, managing to buy Ola expensive Dolce & Gabbana, Gucci and Fendi gifts (pp. 142-143).

Nwaubani's *I Do Not Come to You by Chance* (2009) presents a very ironic turn of events in its presentation of educated versus non-educated folk. It has been shown in great detail above that the educated like Paulinus, Augustina, Kingsley and other unnamed doctors, lawyers, engineers and lecturers are supposed to possess, through their education, the key to 'eternal life' (p. 16). Theirs are supposed to be wealthy and respected lives, and yet, they are anything but. On the contrary, the uneducated folk like Cash Daddy and his 419 colleagues, as well as Ola's businessman husband, are the ones who possess the wealth and respect. Whereas a full, educated brain is supposed to lead to a full pocket, it is actually the 'empty-brained', non-degree-holding individuals of the text that are walking about with the brimming full and overflowing pockets.

4.3 Disillusionment

The result of the ironic turn of events described in detail above leaves individuals like Kingsley and people dependent on him highly disillusioned. He believed what his father had told him about the doors of opportunity that education (a university degree) would open up to him; it had not. In fact, he was at the bottom of the socioeconomic pole while people he had outdistanced academically had now outdistanced him socioeconomically in life.

The aforementioned turn of events disappointed Kingsley, leaving him utterly disillusioned and ultimately ushering him into a life of crime so that he could survive financially and be able to meet his responsibilities as *opara*. Although initially he was against it, he eventually settled into it when he saw all the benefits it brought him. When he saw how successful he was in the 419 industry, he began to feel that he had discovered a hidden talent (of successfully scamming people) that he did not know he had (p. 151). He felt that he had the Midas touch, saying, "This 419 thing was my calling" (p. 207).

Nwaubani's portrayal of the events in her text which are described above forces the reader to think, "is education, and specifically a university degree, really important and worth pursuing for the attainment of success for any individual? How is it that the non-degree-wielding individuals in the text are the ones that had truly acquired the 'recipe for wealth, the pass to respectability, the ticket to eternal life'? Was Cash Daddy, and others in the text who did not acquire university degrees or who performed dismally in the classroom, truly 'empty-brained'?"

This study concurs with the findings of Psychologist Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences as described in detail earlier. Whereas Cash Daddy was not classroom and academically-inclined and was not strong in, say, Linguistic-Verbal intelligence, he nevertheless possessed strong intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligences: he was highly self-aware and knew from a very early age that his motivation was to make money, and he had the ability to relate

and interact effectively with others. He had informed Kingsley, “‘You see, there are two main things people like me have used successfully in business. One is the love of money. The other is a good brain’” (p. 125). Cash Daddy knew he had a good brain. It may not have been good in the classroom, but it was good intrapersonally and interpersonally, and this helped him to succeed not only in business, but later as a politician. Cash Daddy knew, from when he was a child, what he wanted out of life: money, and what he did not want: school. He would play with Kingsley, pretending to be a rich man, throwing imaginary money around and ordering imaginary servants about (p. 43). And while, at the time, that had been a game, presently, it was his reality. He had had a knack for making money since he had been young, when, for instance, he would repackage soda bottles with his own ingenious brew, sell the bottles and make money out of doing so (p. 89). Cash Daddy had a good brain for business. He was therefore not ‘empty-brained’ simply because he had no university degree and had failed his way through the little school he had attended. His brain was not full of academics, but it was full of business savvy, and pursuing his innate strengths and abilities is what led to his success.

Unfortunately, many people over the years have held on to the traditional ‘academic-only’ notion of intelligence. Those who do not do well in school or in the classroom are viewed as being dense and simpleminded. Kingsley’s father Paulinus, for example, was seen as being intelligent as he did well academically. When Paulinus succumbed to his illness, condolers indicated that he was the most intelligent person in their class and always took first position. They said, “‘... he never stopped reading; he always had a book in his hands. Truly, I’ve never met a more intelligent man in my life’” (p. 138). Gardner’s theory indicates that the aforementioned way of defining intelligence is too narrow and limiting.

Kingsley’s former classmate, Andrew, has three Masters degrees from Ivy-league universities, is working at a top IT firm (IBM) in New York and is due to join Harvard University to do his PhD. Andrew mentions that while there are many great minds in Nigeria, sadly, all people think about when one mentions Nigeria is the 419 business. Kingsley thinks to himself, “‘Were the minds of the 419ers any less great than the minds of the Masters degree and PhD holders?’” (p. 245). By so thinking, Kingsley acknowledges - and rightly so - that it is not only people who excel in the classroom, or who have Masters and PhD degrees, that are intelligent or have great minds. People involved in 419, non-academically gifted as they are, nevertheless have great minds, and are gifted differently: they may be interpersonally and intrapersonally intelligent, for example. And these intelligences make them successful and economically stable. They are not ‘empty-brained’ just because they do not do well in the classroom; they are intellectually strong elsewhere, and it is improper to dismiss their overall abilities just because they are not academically sound. Indeed, Albert Einstein, a Noble Prize-winning Physicist (Britannica, 2022), is quoted as saying, “‘Everyone is a genius. But if you judge a fish on its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid.’”

It is important to note Kingsley’s revelations: as a child he was talented in football (p. 16), and later on discovered that he had the talent of convincing people through his written words to invest their money in his dubious business engagements (p. 151). However, his father Paulinus informed him that sports were ‘silly things’ that wasted one’s time (p. 16). Kingsley disregarded his talents to pursue what his father thought was the only way to attain success: a university degree. Paulinus told Kingsley/his children, “‘... any child of mine who decides to be useless and not go to university has his own self to blame for however his life turns out’” (p. 15). He believed that in the absence of a university degree, one could not be successful. Cash Daddy, however, would later recognize Kingsley’s innate abilities to succeed in business, telling him, “‘... I can see that you’re the sort of person that will do very well in business’” (p. 125). And, in fact, it is this business prowess that gave Kingsley his economic success.

Chiwanza (2017) advises that parents should be keen on identifying where their children's talents lie and steer them into careers that encompass those strengths. He asserts:

Parents simply need to appreciate the various talents that their children may have and need to take cognizance of the fact that it is not only academics that guarantee one success....It does not necessarily mean that the only way to success is to follow the academic path when that person has vast talent and potential that is being stifled and not being unleashed.

If children/individuals are academically gifted and want to (but are not forced to) pursue those academic paths, they should be by all means supported. If, however, their intelligences are stronger elsewhere, then they should be encouraged in those other endeavors as well.

While this study does not condone the crime that Kingsley, Cash Daddy and their colleagues were involved in in 419, it nevertheless hails Nwaubani's recognition of the skill and business savvy of such individuals. Kingsley, too, appreciates the skill and ability of Cash Daddy. When Cash Daddy passes away, he says of him, "Unlike my natural father, who had left me nothing but grand ideals and textbooks, Cash Daddy had left me a flourishing business. I was touched. And proud" (p. 335). It must be noted that while individuals may be gifted in certain ways (including academically), *they must nevertheless channel these gifts, talents and intelligences into law-abiding and morally-upright ventures*. Governments, stakeholders in education and society in general, must be focused on offering mentorship to individuals - in whichever way gifted - so that their abilities can be directed into upright activities.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study investigated irony as presented in Nwaubani Tricia Adaobi's *I Do Not Come to You by Chance* (2009), and the disillusionment it worked to reveal. The study used a qualitative approach and applied research methods such as close textual reading and content analysis. It found that Nwaubani's use of irony (where the degree-wielding, 'full-brained' characters of the text had empty pockets) successfully portrayed the disillusionment of the said characters. On the other hand, those who did not have university degrees nevertheless had specific intelligences that enabled them to succeed economically and have full pockets.

The study recommends that stakeholders in education systems (such as governments, schools, career consultants, etc), in Kenya, Africa, and across the world where it so applies, work to break the narrow, limited, traditional misunderstanding that there only exists 'academic intelligence', and instead actively engage in mass education campaigns to enlighten individuals about the different types of intelligences as put forth by Howard Gardner, in order to allow individuals to appreciate their own strengths and abilities, so they can use them to attain their success. Stakeholders must also work hard to see to the creation of job opportunities so that, having polished their various intelligences, individuals can find a place to express the same, and thrive.

The study additionally recommends further research into the works of authors writing about (economic) disillusionment, as a means to show the damage joblessness causes to economies, in addition to leading to crime as shown by Nwaubani. The aforementioned studies, along with the current one, can work to enlighten, and/or perhaps put pressure on governments and stakeholders to provide urgent solutions to the problem of flooded labor markets.

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